NORTH CAROLINA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE



2024 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

August 30, 2024

Agriculture Commissioner – Steve Troxler – Chair
Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission – Cameron Ingram – Vice Chair
Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Jeff Michael – Secretary
Installation Coordinator, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs – Rick Long
Dean of the College of Natural Resources at NC State University – Dr. Myron Floyd
Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership – Chester Lowder
State Roadside Environmental Engineer, NC Department of Transportation – David Harris

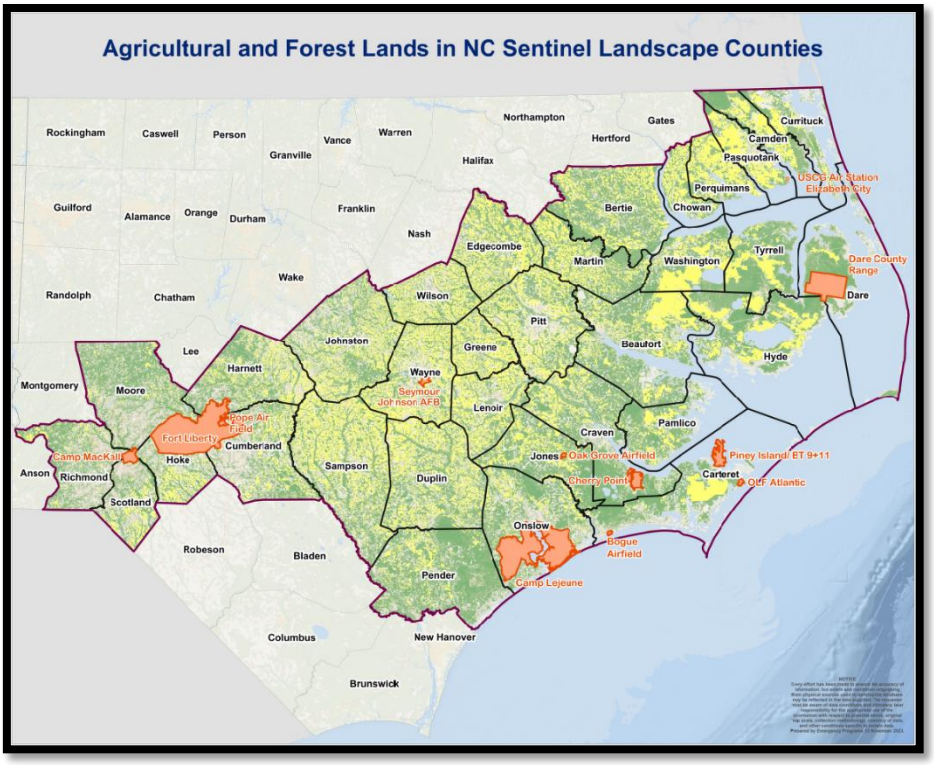
Pursuant to Section 3.19.(f) of Senate Bill 131 / S.L. 2017-10 … The Committee shall report on its activities conducted to implement this section, including any findings, recommendations, and legislative proposals, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and the Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission beginning September 1, 2017, and annually thereafter, until such time as the Committee completes its work.

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What are Sentinel Landscapes?

The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape benefits agriculture, forestry, wildlife, and the military



- In 2016, the federal government designated 33 North Carolina counties as a Sentinel Landscape. The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape is one of 17 Sentinel Landscapes designated by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior.

- The national Sentinel Landscape Partnership is committed to empowering private landowners, strengthening military readiness, preserving natural resources, supporting agricultural productivity, and increasing access to outdoor recreation.

- Regions with increasing commercial and residential development affect agriculture, forestry, wildlife, and the military in similar ways, as development limits training abilities for the military and reduces viable farmland, forests, and natural areas.

- Agriculture and the military are the top two economic sectors in North Carolina. The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape leverages partnerships between military installations, federal departments, state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit partners that support North Carolina's top two economic sectors.

Purpose of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee



- Pursuant to state law, the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee will:

- Coordinate the overlapping priority areas in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations, as that term is defined in G.S. 143-215.115, or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense.

- Assist landowners in improving their land to benefit their operations and enhance wildlife habitats while furthering the State's vested economic interest in preserving, maintaining, and sustaining land uses that are compatible with military activities at major military installations and National Guard facilities.

- Develop and implement programs and strategies that:
    - Protect working lands in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense,
    - Address restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, and
    - Forestall incompatible development in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense.

Committee Members

North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee	
Chair – Steve Troxler	Commissioner of Agriculture
Vice Chair – Cameron Ingram	Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Secretary – Jeff Michael	Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Rick Long	Installation Coordinator, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Dr. Myron Floyd	Dean of the College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University
Chester Lowder	Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership
David Harris	State Roadside Environmental Engineer, NC Department of Transportation

North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Support Staff from NCDA&CS	
David Smith	Chief Deputy Commissioner
Evan Davis	Farmland Preservation Director
Corey Hoilman	Farmland Preservation Assistant Director
Jonathan Lanier	General Counsel
Mark Pfanstiehl	Paralegal
Janine McLawhorn	Paralegal
Nancy Richardson	Paralegal Assistant
Weston McCorkle	Agricultural Programs Specialist
Veronica Jamison	Farmland Preservation Office Manager
Anita Kennedy	Farmland Preservation Specialist
Sabrina Shaffer	Farmland Preservation Monitoring and Stewardship Coordinator
Allison Rodriguez	Farmland Preservation Budget Administrator

N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Report

NCDA&CS Military Partnership Agricultural Conservation Easements since July 2016

Since the establishment of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape in July 2016, the NCDA&CS Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF) has partnered with the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy to record conservation easements. NCDA&CS and the military services provided funds for easement purchases and transactional costs to permanently protect working farms and forests in military training priority zones. In some cases, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided additional funds for easement purchases.

Military Partner	Acres Conserved	Easements Recorded	Counties
USAF-SJAFB	10,905.124	20	Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington
USN/MCIEAST	2,214.591	3	Pamlico, Jones
Total	**13,119.715**	**23**	

The Working Lands Trust (WLT) worked with landowners, private partners, and contractors, along with local, state, and federal staff, to complete the projects. WLT is the easement holder for these conservation easements.

N.C. Military Affairs Commission Memorandum of Understanding

In a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the N.C. Military Affairs Commission, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is contracted to use a portion of the funds and will subcontract the remainder to the Working Lands Trust and the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to support activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL).

New subcontracts were issued with an effective date of July 1, 2024. Once a new ENCSL Coordinator is named, funding from the MOU is available for that position.

Priority Parcels in the ENCSL

The ADFPTF has been working extensively to engage willing landowners to place farms and forests under option for conservation easements and move priority parcels under contract. After contracting, funding partners work with qualified easement-holding entities, like county governments and nonprofit land trusts, to record conservation easements.

The ADFPTF has contracted **2,886 acres** of privately-owned farms and forests determined by military partners to be in areas vital to the training mission of the armed services. The total

project value for these conservation easement contracts totals $5.8 million. The ADFPTF leveraged over $3.5 million in federal funds for these projects.

Military Partnership Contracts

The following contracts are funded through the military services and the ADFPTF. These conservation easement projects total **2,886 acres**.

SJAFB Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	SJAFB Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Washington	WLT	1,164.08	$766,225.00	$766,255.00	$1,455,000.00	$2,987,450.00
Totals		**1,164.08**	**$766,225.00**	**$766,255.00**	**$1,455,000.00**	**$2,987,450.00**

MCIEAST Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	MCIEAST Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Jones	WLT	138.68	$73,583.77	$97,483.77	-	$182,067.55
Jones	WLT	31.04	$21,344.81	$45,244.81	-	$77,589.62
Jones	WLT	197.30	$208,082.98	$231,982.98	-	$451,065.95
Onslow	WLT	485.01	$298,375.00	$317,175.00	-	$626,550.00
Pamlico	WLT	870.17	$741,856.00	$733,566.00	-	$1,475,412.00
Totals		**1,722.20**	**$1,343,242.56**	**$1,425,452.56**	**-**	**$2,812,685.12**

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Report

Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP)
RASP has completed planting of Longleaf and Native Grasses on 851 Acres at Bear Garden. Staff has also had a successful annual field inspection with representatives from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Lejeune in October 2023 to share accomplishments.

Technical Guidance
Operations program staff with NCWRC's Wildlife Management Division continues to work within the ENCSL focal area to expand private lands conservation. From *June 2023 through May 2024*, staff met with 56 private landowners within the NCSL focal area. These site visits resulted in management guidance being provided for 7,481 acres. This guidance targets the enhancement of habitat for various Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).

Operations program staff also finalized 8 Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreements (WHCA) within the NCSL focal area during 2023. These agreements are required for landowners to sign up for property tax deferment through the Wildlife Conservation Land Program (WCLP). These 8 agreements resulted in a total of 491 acres being enrolled in WCLP for the 2024 tax year.

County	Number of Site Visits	Acres Impacted
Bertie	1	390
Hyde	4	1415
Moore	13	504
Cumberland	2	512
Edgecombe	4	950
Harnett	7	366
Sampson	6	1403
Pender	4	640
Duplin	2	78
Jones	1	200
Scotland	1	135
Johnston	5	413
Pitt	1	50
Onslow	1	48
Wayne	3	117
Wilson	1	260
Total		7481

Operations staff with NCWRC's Wildlife Management Division have spent much of their time in Fall 2023 conducting Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) monitoring activities. This disease impacts cervid species including white-tailed deer. To date, CWD has been detected in Cumberland and Johnston Counties within the NCSL. More information on CWD can be found at https://www.ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Chronic-Wasting-Disease.

Angola Bay Game Land Resilience - Pender County

The Commission has continued to partner with The Nature Conservancy on an Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to complete 7,500 acres of hydrologic restoration on Angola Bay Game Land in Pender County. This project will enhance pocosin wetland habitat and provide community flood resilience benefits to downstream communities (Burgaw, Castle Hayne, and Wilmington).

1. Phase I: implementation to be completed Spring 2024.
2. NCWRC staff have initiated infrastructure installation, including the installation of 11 aluminum flashboard risers for water control structures on the baseline roads as well as 14 weirs further up the watershed.
3. Project has completed 2.2 miles of road raising to facilitate water holding capacity while maintaining road drivability to maintain public and game land management access.
4. NCWRC and The Nature Conservancy were recently notified that NFWF awarded America the Beautiful funding to help fully fund this project and implement the restoration of peatland Atlantic white cedar forest.
5. Phase II: scope of Work documents in the bidding process as of February 2024

Other habitat related projects

- Prescribed fire management: At least 2500 ac game lands treated within the footprint in Winter 2024
- Working with USFWS for $5mil in IRA funds for 2 game lands and 1 BAA to provide resiliency for anticipated sea level rise and other climate related threats.
    - Goose Creek game land (near Aurora, NC; Beaufort and Pamlico counties)
    - Gull Rock game land (near Swanquarter, NC; Hyde County)
    - Engelhard BAA (Engelhard, NC; Hyde County)

Fieldwork with Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Sandhills chub – Through a multi-year Competitive State and Tribal Wildlife Grant received in 2022, NCWRC and SCDNR are continuing efforts on Fort Bragg/Camp Mackall targeted at Sandhills Chub in collaboration with DoD and Coastal Carolina University (CCU). The Sandhills chub (*Semotilus lumbee*) is an imperiled headwater fish that is geographically restricted in the Sandhills ecoregion in North and South Carolina and a SGCN in both states and this project is focused on filling knowledge gaps to support future conservation efforts.

- Two MS students from CCU are marking individuals with PIT tags, monitoring fish travel distances in Gum Branch Creek and Aberdeen Creek within Drowning Creek watershed in the Lumber River drainage, and collecting fin clips for the population genetics.
- A total of 208 Sandhills Chub were captured between the two streams in June and July.
- From June to July, the average distance moved is 14 meters and the median distance moved is 0 meters between the two streams.
- The spawning season appears to run from April through June.

Gopher frog - WRC is partnering with the NC Zoo to "headstart" Gopher Frog egg masses into juvenile frogs then released back to the wild. The releases have occurred near Ft. Liberty (near Ft. Bragg) and Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU).

Wood Stork - The Waterbird Team works with UNC-Wilmington to look for Wood Stork nesting sites in wooded swamps using unoccupied aerial vehicle ("drones"). After confirmation of the nesting sites from the ground, WRC works with the landowners, including Audubon NC, NC State Parks, and private individuals, to help them in making decisions about land management.

Partners for Green Growth

NCWRC continues to utilize the Green Growth Toolbox (GGT) to support communities in the NCSL with various planning efforts.

- **Leland, NC (Brunswick County)** – The Town of Leland recently completed a Green Network Plan to support conservation of priority habitats and species. The plan helps the community understand its conservation priorities and how to integrate protection of these areas into parks and greenway planning and land use planning – including zoning and ordinances. The plan was funded by the Partners for Green Growth Program and is to be considered for adoption by the Town Council on June 20, 2024.
- **Pender County** – Pender County has been awarded a cost-share grant from NCWRC to develop a preferred development guide and model ordinances for incorporating wildlife conservation into their land use and development planning process. The funding will be used to evaluate the county's current regulations pertaining to open space, the creation of conservation-based incentives and ordinances, outreach to landowners, developers, and staff, and the drafting of the preferred development guide. NCWRC staff will provide technical guidance to Pender County in identifying critical habitat and in the drafting of the preferred development guide. The goal of the project is to provide county planners with a resource to utilize conservation during the review process for proposed development.

America the Beautiful proposal invitations

NCWRC has been awarded two NFWF America the Beautiful grants that will have direct benefit within the NC Eastern Sentinel Landscape. One is for the Angola Bay Game land resiliency project described above.

The second project is focused on habitat restoration within Southeast Sentinel Landscapes to benefit Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) across the southeast including NC, SC, GA, FL in coordination with SERPPAS (Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability) and SECAS (Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy).

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is a bipartisan bill re-introduced this congressional session on the Senate floor and pending introduction in the House. NC has the potential to receive over $20 million annually to fully implement the NC Wildlife Action Plan (WAP). The legislation would provide federal funding to fully implement Wildlife Action Plans in NC and all other states with a Plan to keep "common species common" and off the federal species list. Find additional information about RAWA (ncwildlife.org/RAWA) or search #RecoverWildlife to follow any updates.

- Senate Bill 1149 – 19 total co-sponsors including NC Senator Tillis & NC Senator Budd

N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) is home to several divisions and programs that support the mission of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partnership, including the NC Division of Parks & Recreation and the NC Division of Land & Water Stewardship (home to the NC Land and Water Fund and the NC Natural Heritage Program). In addition to the work of these divisions, DNCR is engaged in several cross-agency initiatives that contribute to the ENCSL mission through land protection and land use planning strategies throughout eastern North Carolina.

NC Division of Parks & Recreation

The NC Division of Parks & Recreation (NCDPR) manages more than 262,000 acres of iconic landscape within North Carolina's 35 state parks, 4 state recreation areas and dozens of state trails and natural areas. It administers the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (including its local grants program), the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund, a state trails system, North Carolina Natural and Scenic Rivers and more, all with a mission dedicated to conservation, recreation and education. The state parks system welcomes more than 19 million visitors annually.

While NCDPR maintains an active land acquisition program to expand its holdings in strategically important areas for recreation and natural resources conservation, it did not complete any such acquisitions in the ENCSL counties over the past year.

NC Division of Land and Water Stewardship

The Division of Land and Water Stewardship includes two programs focused on preserving North Carolina's unique environment – the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and the Natural Heritage Program. Both programs have contributed significantly to the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partnership.

North Carolina Land and Water Fund Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2023-August 2024)

North Carolina's Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) was established by the General Assembly in 1996 as a non-regulatory organization with a focus on protecting and restoring the State's land and water resources. NCLWF awards grants to non-profit and governmental organizations to protect land for natural, historical and cultural benefit, limit encroachment on military installations and provide match for federal funds that buffer military installation, restore degraded streams, and develop and improve stormwater treatment technology.

At its funding meeting in September 2023, NCLWF awarded $9,807,746 to purchase property in fee or conservation easements on 8,957 acres in the ENCSL counties. Project details are listed

below. When a project would directly benefit a particular installation, that is noted in the last column.

County	Organization	Project Name	Acres	Award Total	Installation
Richmond	Three Rivers Land Trust	Sharpe Tract - Toms Branch	85	$297,240	
Richmond	Three Rivers Land Trust	Sharpe Tract - Grassy Island	205	$565,100	
Scotland	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Jordan Timber Tracts - Sandhills Game Land	2,021	$1,000,000	US Army Fort Liberty
Bertie	NC Coastal Land Trust	Point Comfort Tract - Chowan River	17	$200,750	
Harnett	Three Rivers Land Trust	Linderman Tract - Cape Fear River	86	$314,130	
Craven	NC Coastal Land Trust	Smith-Sugg Pocosin	1,290	$516,890	MCAS Cherry Point
Pender	The Nature Conservancy	Beasley Tract - Holly Shelter Game Land NA	462	$1,676,985	USMC Camp Lejeune
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	Selma Town Park - Neuse River	89	$1,200,000	USAF Seymour Johnson
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	Rogerson Tract - Little River Galax Bluffs NA	99	$637,640	
Carteret	The Conservation Fund	North River Tract - Thomas Creek	158	$265,690	
Carteret	NC Coastal Land Trust	Weyerhaeuser Tract Phase 2 - Newport River	587	$1,054,730	MCAS Cherry Point
Carteret	NC Coastal Federation	Trail Extension Tract - North River Wetlands Preserve	786	$964,691	MCAS Cherry Point
Johnston	Johnston County	Kat Property - Neuse River	72	$1,113,900	USAF Seymour Johnson
		Totals	**5,957**	**$9,807,746**	

Natural Heritage Program Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2023-August 2024)

North Carolina's Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) conducts biological surveys of natural lands and maintains an inventory of rare species and high-quality examples of natural communities. Many of these inventories are conducted in cooperation with partners who are interested in setting aside land for conservation, a land use which is compatible with maintaining the military mission footprint in North Carolina.

NCNHP encourages conservation and stewardship of natural areas through creation of Dedicated Nature Preserves (DNP) and Registered Heritage Areas (RHA) under the Nature Preserves Act (GS 143B-135.250-.272). Dedicated Nature Preserves are permanently protected through a legally binding agreement with DNCR to manage the land for conservation of its natural heritage resources. State-owned land can only be removed from dedication upon approval of the governor and the Council of State. Registered Heritage Areas are agreements between the NCNHP and the landowner recognizing the natural heritage value of the land or water. Owners of Registered Heritage Areas sign a voluntary agreement with DNCR demonstrating their commitment to protecting the natural heritage resources of their property. These landowners may receive help with biological surveys and management recommendations.

During the past year, NCNHP has continued to lead the selection and nomination for registration or dedication of natural areas. The NC Department of Adult Correction Newport River Wetlands Dedicated Nature Preserve was established to voluntarily protect 69 acres within Carteret County during this past period. The Tall Glass of Water Park Registered Heritage Area was established with Bertie County Parks and Recreation, protecting 32 acres.

The table below shows natural heritage surveys conducted by NCNHP to assist with land conservation activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape during September 2023-August 2024. Approximately 4,000 acres were surveyed by NCNHP staff in the Sentinel Landscape area during this timeframe. Natural areas are listed in alphabetical order by county. Permission to visit the sites was granted by landowners and land managers.

County	Natural Area	Partner Agency
Carteret	North River Wetlands Preserve	NC Coastal Federation, NC Land and Water Fund
Carteret, Craven, Jones	Croatan National Forest	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Chowan	Chowan Swamp Game Land	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC Land and Water Fund
Cumberland	Big Pond Bay	Private landowner
Cumberland	Glenville Lake	Fayetteville Public Works
Currituck	Currituck Banks Wildlife Corridor	Corolla Wild Horse Fund, NC Land and Water Fund

County	Natural Area	Partner Agency
Dare	Nags Head Woods	City of Nags Head, NC Land and Water Fund
Harnett	Raven Rock State Park	NC Division of Parks and Recreation, NC Land and Water Fund
Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington	Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Moore	Eastwood Preserve	NC Plant Conservation Program
Moore	Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve	NC Division of Parks and Recreation, NC Land and Water Fund
Onslow	Horse Swamp	The Nature Conservancy, NC Land and Water Fund
Scotland	Johns Pond	Three Rivers Land Trust, NC Land and Water Fund
Scotland, Hoke	McIntosh Bay and Antioch Bay	NC Plant Conservation Program, The Nature Conservancy
Tyrrell	Scuppernong River Swamp	NC Coastal Land Trust, NC Land and Water Fund

CROSS-AGENCY INITIATIVES

Executive Order 305: In February 2024, Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order 305, an "Order to Protect and Restore North Carolina's Critical Natural and Working Lands," with DNCR serving as one of the lead implementation agencies. This executive order sets goals, policies, and directives to protect and restore natural and working lands statewide, with an emphasis on wetlands and forests. Among the executive order's goals: protecting 1 million more acres of land in North Carolina by the year 2040.

US EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant: In July 2024, NC DNCR was awarded $421 million through the EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Program on behalf of a coalition of four states and The Nature Conservancy. Called the Atlantic Conservation Coalition, the project will leverage the carbon sequestration power of natural and working lands to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by coordinating land conservation, forest restoration and wetlands protection/restoration initiatives in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland.

Together Executive Order 305 and the $421 million CPRG award will support the mission of ENCSL by stating clear priorities for natural and working lands conservation, restoration, and acquisition as well as providing funding resources for those strategic priorities – especially in the eastern North Carolina counties served by ENCSL.

N.C. State University College of Natural Resources Report

Landowner Outreach

The College of Natural Resources Extension faculty and staff works with its partners to enable North Carolinians to make informed decisions concerning the management, enhancement, and enjoyment of their forest and other natural resources through sound, research-based information and education. The following educational events are highlighted to demonstrate our efforts over the reporting period.

Heir's Property Workshops
NC A& T State University and NC State Forestry Extension offered six heirs property summits in 2024 across North Carolina. Heirs' property is land that is jointly owned by descendants of a deceased person whose estate was never handled in probate court and is passed down from generation to generation. These joint owners (heirs) have the right to use the property though none may have a clear title. Without proper documentation or a court proceeding to clear the "cloudy" title, third parties (like banks, mortgage lending companies and others have no way of knowing who is really entitled to the property and whether any creditor claims apply and thus none of the heirs can sell, mortgage, or make any repairs to the real estate.

These training sessions provided valuable materials and guidance to avoid involuntary property loss, and protect and preserve family land for generations to come. Participants learned about the origin and history of heirs property, estate planning, and legal strategies to secure one's property, including opportunities to listen from a panel who were dealing with heirs' issues. Workshops were – January 31, February 7, March 6, April 10, May 8, and July 17, 2024.

Webinars
NC State Extension partners with organizations such as NC Tree Farm Program, ForestHer, Sustainable Forestry Land Retention Project and others to conduct webinars on various topics of interest to Forest landowners and other stakeholders. We hosted 16 webinars from Sep 1, 2023 to Aug 31, 2024.

- Healthy Habitats for Healthy Wildlife – Sep 7, 2023
- All About Pollinators! Fall Edition – Oct 26, 2023
- Building Trails on Your Property – Nov 2, 2023
- Timber Tax: Landowner Issues and Considerations – Nov 30, 2023
- Keeping Forests as Forests – Incentive Programs for the North Carolina Landowner – Jan 24, 2024
- Silvopasture: An Introduction and Overview – Jan 30, 2024
- Establishing Pine Silvopasture When Starting from Pastures or Plantations – Feb 6, 2024
- Establishing Hardwood Silvopasture Systems When Starting from Pastures or Woodlands – Feb 13, 2024
- From Forage to Livestock: Managing Animals in a Silvopasture System – Feb 20,

2024
- Moving Towards a Silvopasture System: Getting Started & Finding Help – Feb 27, 2024
- Silvopasture producers share their stories and Answer Questions: A Panel Discussion – Mar 5, 2024
- Exploring Succession and Estate Planning: A Panel Discussion – Mar 15, 2024
- North Carolina Forest Product Markets – Mar 21, 2024
- Domestic and Global Hardwood Market Update – Apr 18, 2024
- Succession Planning – Part 1 & 2: A Guide to Farm/Forestland Succession Planning – Apr 24 - 25, 2024
- Agricultural Conservation Easements and Military Partnership Easements – Aug 15, 2024

Research

NC Frazer Fir 2023 White House Christmas Tree (source Beth Grace)
North Carolina is known for its native Fraser firs, which grow best in climates over 3,000 feet. Overall, more than 850 North Carolina growers produce about 50 million trees on 38,000-plus acres. More than a quarter of all Christmas trees grown in the United States are Fraser firs. This industry was nonexistent until the 1950s. A partnership of growers, NC State's researchers and Christmas Tree Extension Team, the U.S. Forestry Service, and state agriculture officials fostered the development of the industry. It is now the second-most prolific Christmas tree harvesting state in the nation.

A NC family of growers presented this year's 18.5 feet White House Christmas Tree, which stood in the Blue Room of the White House. This is the 15th time the honor has gone to a North Carolina grower. Annually the White House tree grower is selected in competition with growers from all over the country.

Justin Whitehill, an assistant professor and extension specialist in Christmas tree genetics and research lead for NC State's Christmas Tree Genetics Program, credits the growers' hard work and support, the popularity of Fraser firs and the work of the university's team to manage pests and funguses, and genetics that has, in effect, created an improved Christmas tree. For more of the story: https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2023/12/extension-white-house-tree

Unmanned Aerial Systems
The Center for Geospatial Analytics is innovating with the use of drones and drone-acquired data to address challenges in a variety of sectors, uniting expertise across disciplines. Within the NC State College of Natural Resources, the Center is an active hub for:

- Research using UAS data for terrain analysis to improve spatial understanding, including forecasting environmental and landscape change.
- Education about UAS operations and analytics through courses and workshops
- Technical support for UAS mission planning, imagery processing and analytics

For more information on the various uses of drones and drone-acquired data within the Center- visit: https://cnr.ncsu.edu/geospatial/research

AI-Powered Waste Management System to Revolutionize Recycling

Researcher, Lokendra Pal (College of Natural Resources, NC State University), has partnered with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, IBM and the Town of Cary with support from the US Department of Energy to generate a process that reduces the 290 million tons of municipal solid waste generated each year. Approximately 50% of this generated waste decomposes in landfills emitting greenhouse gases that account for 25% of today's global warming. The collaborators are developing a "smart waste management system" to identify non-recyclable waste items that can be converted into renewable products, and perhaps energy and fuel.

"The sustainable utilization of non-recyclable waste will empower businesses to utilize it as a renewable carbon resource and will support them in the journey toward a low-carbon economy," Pal said. A component of this work will be improving the recognition and classification of non-recyclable waste. "In sum, our approach supports the development of sustainable solutions for waste valorization, optimizing resource recovery, minimizing waste generation, reducing emissions, and mitigating environmental impacts while engaging municipalities and industries across the supply chain," Pal said. *Publication for the College of Natural Resources News, Andrew Moore, Nov 9, 2023.*

New Model Adds Human Reactions to Flood Risk Assessment

Researchers at the College of Natural Resources Center for Geospatial Analytics (NC State University) have created a land change model that simulates interactions between urban growth, increased flooding and how humans adapt in response. The new model is designed to offer a more realistic assessment of risk for urban planners, natural resource managers and other local government stakeholders.

Impacts of sea level rise will last for centuries; therefore, flood risk modeling must transition from identifying risky locations to assessing how populations can best adapt. A spatially interactive (i.e., what happens at one location affects another) land change model (FUTURES 3.0) is introduced that can probabilistically predict urban growth while simulating human migration and other responses to flooding, depicting the geography of impact and response. Accounting for human migration reduced total amounts of projected developed land exposed to flooding by 2050 by 5%–24%, depending on flood hazard zone (50%–0.2% annual probability). The simulation of various "what-if" scenarios with managed retreat appears to be the only intervention with predicted exposure below baseline conditions. In the business-as-usual scenario, existing and future development must be either protected or abandoned to cope with future flooding. The model, FUTURES 3.0 (FUTure Urban-Regional Environment Simulation), is an open-source, scalable model that includes three components of flood risk: exposure, which refers to urban development patterns; hazard, which includes increases in flooding due to climate change; and vulnerability, or the adaptive response of people living in the area. The model incorporates climate data as well as demographic, socio-economic and flood-damage data and can be applied to different regions and advances local to regional-scale efforts to evaluate

potential risks and tradeoffs. For more information: https://cnr.ncsu.edu/2023/11/06/new-model-adds-human-reactions-to-flood-risk-assessment

Academic Programs

Partnerships to improve US Army Corps of Engineers' geospatial data applications
The Center for Geospatial Analytics led the establishment of an education partnership agreement with the US Army Engineer Research and Development Center to encourage and enhance the study of STEM disciplines, which improve the US Army Corps of Engineers' geospatial data applications for military, civil works and DoD installation management missions.

Publications

Economic Contribution of the Forest Sector by North Carolina Congressional District
North Carolina has about 19 million acres of timberland, which supports a robust forest products industry across the state. The forest sector, including forestry and logging, primary and secondary forest product and furniture industries, is the top employer among manufacturing sectors in North Carolina. In 2022, the NC forest sector contributed $42.5 billion, supporting approximately 152,000 jobs with a payroll of $10.1 billion. This publication breaks down how the forest sector contributed to the North Carolina economy in 2022, including employment, labor income, and more for North Carolina's 14 congressional. To learn more about the contribution the forest sector has to North Carolina's economy visit Economic Impact Data.

Economic Contribution of the Forest Sector in North Carolina, 2022.
Amidst high inflation and increased economic activity, the forest sector in North Carolina continued to surge, with a total economic size of greater than $42.5 billion in 2022. Compared to 2021, the North Carolina forest sector realized a significant gain in 2022—nearly $7.3 billion in total economic activities across the state—predominantly in rural counties.

Developing Successful Tree Ordinances
Communities use tree ordinances as tools to protect trees, preserve green space, and promote healthy, managed urban forests. To protect trees and prevent their loss in the urban environment, communities need to understand tree ordinances, their limitations, and their proper implementation.

Tree ordinances establish official policies for how a community wants to maintain and protect its trees. They set standards for selection, planting, maintaining, and conserving community trees. Ordinances seek to establish a legal means of protecting the public interest. These ordinances can also assist in protecting and enhancing a community forest through a permanent or official tree protection policy.

Landowner Assistance: NC Present Use Tax Program (PUV) and Voluntary Ag District Program (VAD)
North Carolina's Present Use Tax Program (PUV) and Voluntary Ag District Program (VAD) can offer forest landowners valuable assistance to help retain and protect their forest land investment. A forest management plan is essential to participate in these programs. This webinar

explains the PUV and VAD programs, requirements, and benefits as well as elements of a forest management plan and what is needed in the plan for various programs. Utilizing these programs can make a big difference in property tax liability including protecting one's forest investment.

Wildfire Resources In North Carolina

Wildfire risk is an important issue for North Carolina as our state experiences some of the greatest number wildfires in the country. North Carolina has a significant area of wildland urban interface (WUI). A WUI is the transition zone between unoccupied land and land occupied for human development, the zone where these two areas intermingle and can create a situation ripe for a wildfire that can damage homes and neighborhoods or wildfire smoke that can impact one's health. What do we need to know to help counter that risk? Know the resources available to help create fire-adapted communities in your area such as the role of the NC Forest Service as the state's fire management and suppression agency, or the value of fire resistant landscaping, or the availability of the interactive map to monitor the current wildfire danger rating in your area. For that and more resources visit: https://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/2023/11/wildfire-resources-in-north-carolina

Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report

Established through a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture, and Department of the Interior in 2013, the Sentinel Landscape Partnership was created to streamline federal voluntary landowner assistance in areas around military installations and ranges, areas where funding permanent conservation or offsetting costs associated with preserving or enhancing natural resources could advance the collective objectives of all three Departments and, in doing so, reduce internal resource constraints and accelerate the impact of taxpayer dollars. Administered by a Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC), which is composed of leadership from all participating agencies, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership defines sentinel landscapes as areas in which natural lands are well suited to protect defense facilities from land use that is incompatible with the military's mission. In accordance with that definition, the Sentinel Landscapes' FCC designates sentinel landscapes in areas across the country where an established local partnership has demonstrated their alignment with and readiness to advance sentinel landscape goals with the support of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership.

The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL) received its designed by the Sentinel Landscape Partnership's FCC in 2016 and spans 33 counties in North Carolina's Coastal Plain and Sandhills. The ENCSL is anchored by five military installations and ranges - Fort Liberty/Camp Mackall, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the Dare County Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. The vision of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership is to safeguard the Nation's defense mission by preserving and restoring the existing and natural character of key landscapes that reduce land use conflicts with the training, testing, and operational missions of military installations and ranges while helping enhance agricultural economies; conserving and restoring habitat and natural resources; and facilitating adaptation to climate changes, such as more extreme storms, droughts, wildfire, and, for our coastal region, rising sea levels. With more than forty federal and state agency, non-profit, and private partners, the ENCSL Partnership leverages the collective resources and overlapping missions of its partner organizations to implement a regional approach that conserves functioning ecosystems, bolsters working land economies, and enhances the climate resiliency of human and natural communities, and, in doing so, supports the two leading drivers of North Carolina's economy: agriculture and defense.

ENCSL Partnership: Funding Committed and Acreage Protected and Enrolled

Partners of the ENCSL Partnership collectively contributed or secured unprecedented levels of state funding to advance the ENCSL mission in 2023 (Fig. 1). In 2023, ENCSL partners committed or secured more than $34 million in state funding, protected 10,824 acres of land through acquisition or easement, and enrolled 130,142 acres of land in some form of cost share. Finalized 2023 funding contributions and acreage protected/enrolled data for US Department of Defense, Department of Interior, and Department of Agriculture partners are forthcoming and, once included, will provide a full picture of the accomplishments of the ENCSL Partnership in 2023. Preliminary funding committed data from DoD partners for 2023 totals $7.2 million,

making 2023 the year with the highest level of committed funding since the Partnership's inception, even with DOI and USDA data yet to be incorporated. Since the designation of the ENCSL in late 2016, this brings the cumulative funding committed or secured by partners to advance the ENCSL mission to $263.7 million, the acreage protected by ENCSL partners to 213,246, and the acreage enrolled in some form of cost share by partners to 1,518,995.

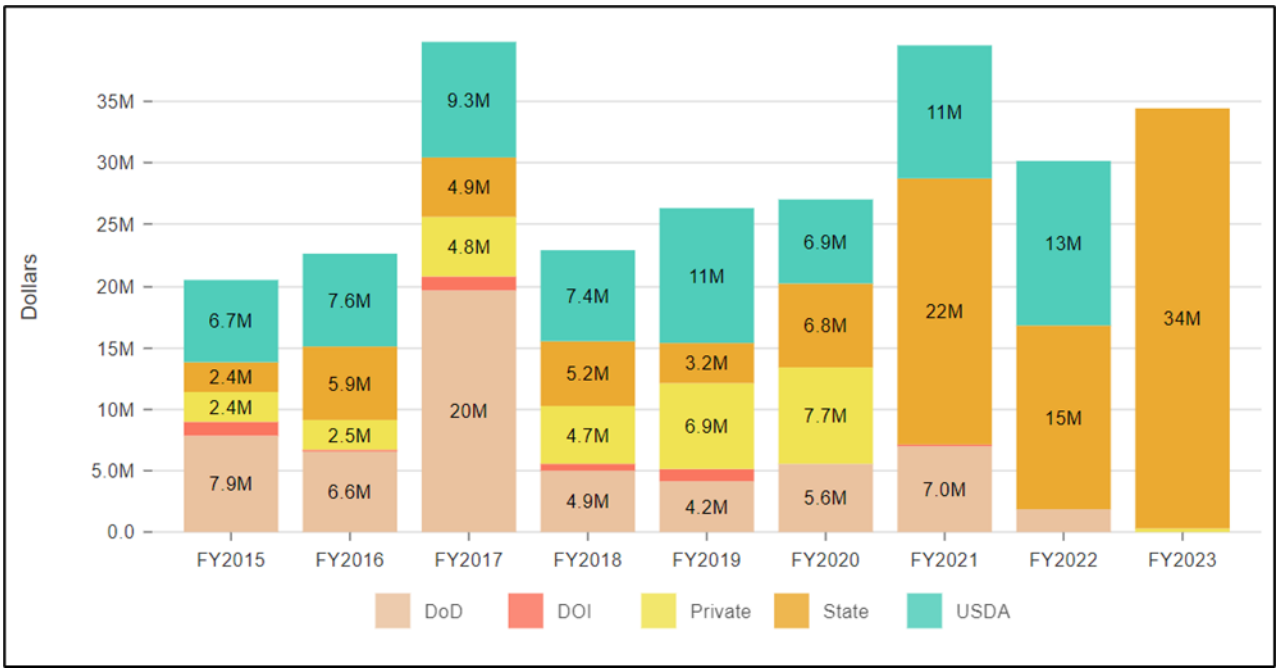


Figure 1. Committed funding by ENCSL partner organization or group of partners by year. NOTE: DoD, DOI, and USDA data for 2023 is not incorporated. Source: Sentinel Landscape

ENCSL Program Review

In November 2023, the ENCSL Partnership initiated a programmatic review of the Partnership in order to identify needs and pursue opportunities to support enhanced value of the Partnership to its partners and their stakeholders and to ensure that the Partnership is fully leveraging the suite of benefits that accompany Sentinel Landscape designation. In collaboration with the NC Sentinel Landscape Committee and the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's Federal Coordinating Committee, the ENCSL Partnership identified three focal areas for the programmatic review, which are as follow: 1) identifying and implementing an updated ENCSL governance structure that meets the needs of the growing and evolving Partnership; 2) identifying and implementing the most efficacious planning processes to update the ENCSL Strategic Plan; and 3) identifying capacity and expertise needs to support efficient and effective implementation of the updated Strategic Plan.

In January 2024, two workgroups, the ENCSL Strategic Planning and the ENCSL Governance Structure Workgroups, were established and convened prior to our kickoff ENCSL Program Review convening (1/31/2024). These workgroups developed recommendations for a strategic planning approach and governance body structure/roles/responsibilities, respectively, that were

presented to the ENCSL Partnership during the ENCSL Program Review Kickoff Meeting. Subsequent to the kickoff meeting, workgroups were reconvened to consider, incorporate, reconcile partner feedback and build out increasingly robust, revised recommendations to share with the full Partnership during our second ENCSL Program Review convening (2/28/2024). In the second convening, the Partnership built consensus on the most effective strategic planning approach and a streamlined governance structure for the ENCSL Partnership. The Partnership chose to pursue three regional planning processes aligning with the priority geographies of our represented military branches in the ENCSL: US Army (Fort Liberty), US Air Force (Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and Dare County Range), and US Marine Corps (Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point). Further, a more streamlined governance structure for the ENCSL Partnership was identified, which entailed the proposed expansion of the state's NC Sentinel Landscape Committee to include additional ex-officio members and for that expanded Committee to serve as the ENCSL's governance body, the ENCSL Local Coordinating Committee.

The proposal for the expansion of the state's NC Sentinel Landscape Committee to include additional ex-officio membership and its service as the governing body of the ENCSL was presented to the Committee on March 18, 2024 and unanimously approved. Through the efforts of the Committee, and with the support of the General Assembly, the composition of the Committee was formally amended to include additional ex-officio membership through Senate Bill 355, Section 17 G.S. 106-747. This expanded body (Fig. 2) will serve as the ENCSL Partnership's governance body going forward.

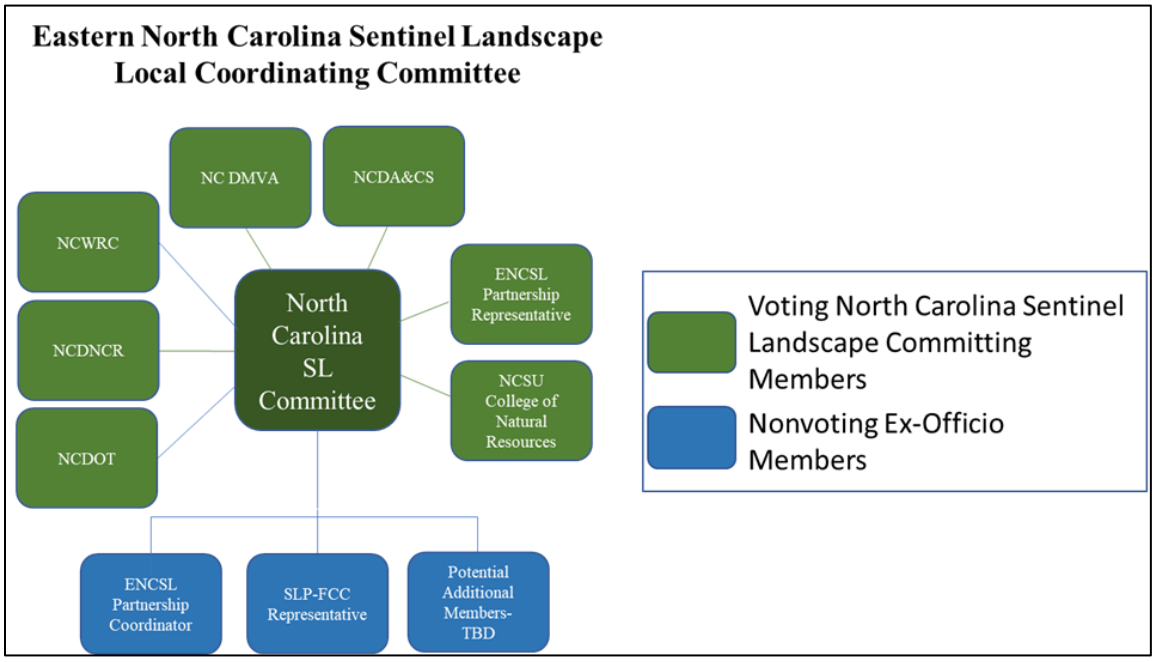


Figure 2. Diagram of the composition of the expanded North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee, which now serves as the ENCSL's Local Coordinating Committee

In furtherance of expeditious development of a robust update to the ENCSL Strategic Plan, regional strategic planning workshops were held in Goldsboro, Fayetteville, and Newport, NC, in May and June of 2024. In each workshop, partners developed priority strategies and actions to advance the collective goals of the ENCSL Partnership. Outputs from the workshops are being synthesized into the ENCSL Strategic Plan: 2024-2028, which will be finalized by the end of September, 2024. Once finalized, the ENCSL Local Coordinating Committee and the Partnership will work to robustly evaluate the capacity and any additional expertise needed to implement the Strategic Plan. That assessment and a plan to secure any identified capacity and expertise needs will be completed in the fall of 2024.



Figure 3. Pictures from ENCSL Regional Strategic Planning Workshops.

ENCSL Partnership Meetings

Partnership Meetings (In Person): September 14, 2023; October 19, 2023; November 9, 2023; January 31, 2024 [Program Review Meeting #1]; February 28, 2024 [Program Review Meeting #2]; April 30, 2024 [Program Review Meeting #3].

Partnership Meetings (Virtual): September 18, 2023; October 23, 2023; November 13, 2023; January 5, 9, & 11, 2024 [ENCSL Program Review Q&A].

ENCSL Workgroup Meetings

Program Review Workgroup Meetings (Virtual): January 19, 2024; January 24, 2024; February 5, 2024; February 14, 2024; February 21, 2024.

ENCSL Workshops

December 5, 2023: Wayne County Stakeholders' Flood Resilience Workshop- Virtual.

May 20, 2024: Regional Strategic Planning Workshop for the Priority Geography of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the Dare County Range- Goldsboro, North Carolina.

May 29, 2024: Regional Strategic Planning Workshop for the Priority Geography of Fort Liberty- Fayetteville, North Carolina

June 21, 2024: Regional Strategic Planning Workshop for the Priority Geography of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point- Newport, North Carolina.

ENCSL Presentations

September 7, 2023: *Tapping into New Federal Climate Resilience Funding for Land Trusts and Defense Communities* at Land Trust Alliance Rally- Portland, Oregon.

October 11, 2023: *The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership: Innovation in Programming and Partnership* at the DOD/FEMA site visit to Camp Lejeune- Jacksonville, North Carolina.

October 18, 2023: *The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership: Advancing Resiliency through Innovation in Programming and Partnership* at Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration's (REPI) Partnerships to Advance Climate Resilience in Sentinel Landscapes Webinar Series- Virtual.

November 14, 2023: *The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape: Updates and Future Directions* at the Albemarle-Pamlico Federal Agency Partnership Meeting- Manteo, North Carolina.

December 6, 2023: *Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Update* at the North Carolina Longleaf Pine Summit- Virtual.

January 11, 2024: *Opportunities to Leverage EPA NPS Programming in Furtherance of Advancing Sentinel Landscape Priorities: Examples of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape* at the EPA NPS Technical Exchange Webcast- Virtual.

March 18, 2024: *ENCSL Program Review Update* at the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee meeting- Raleigh, North Carolina.

March 25, 2024: *REPI Resilience Primer Step 2: Identify a Partner Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Case Study* at the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association Meeting; REPI Program Session- Grand Rapids, Michigan.

April 24, 2024: *The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership: An Overview* at North Carolina State University's Envisioning Transformations Conference- Raleigh, North Carolina.

June 11, 2024: *ENCSL Program Review Update* at the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee meeting- Raleigh, North Carolina.

June 12, 2024: *We Have Funding… Do we Have a Project?* at the Eastern Carolina Commission's Planning Ahead: A Resiliency and Infrastructure Grant/Project Resource Roundtable- New Bern, North Carolina.

August 13, 2024: *Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Update* at the NC Military Affairs Commission meeting- Raleigh, NC.

Successful Partner Grants Directly Benefitting the ENCSL Mission

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 2023 America the Beautiful Challenge:

Building Resiliency of Longleaf Pine Ecosystems in Southeastern Sentinel Landscapes (FL, GA, NC, SC). Grantee: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

- Complete prescribed burns, mechanical and chemical treatments and hand cutting to improve habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species on 42,290 acres of longleaf pine habitat, and perform road crossings and culverts surveys. Project will improve upland and wetland habitats for at-risk species, data on aquatic barriers and connectivity to drive future remediation efforts and ecosystem resilience for Southeastern Sentinel Landscapes in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.
- Total Project Amount: $2,687,300

Establishing Peatland Atlantic White Cedar Forest on Game Lands in North Carolina. Grantee: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

- Establish Atlantic white cedar forest and adapted peatland plant species, including bald cypress and button bush, and accomplish hydrologic restoration in a pocosin-peatland environment at Angola Bay Game Land. Project will impact 1,383 acres of recently harvested pine plantation stands and include the installation of 13 water control structures and raising of 8 miles of vulnerable road, in turn optimized hydrologic conditions will allow Atlantic white cedar forest communities to thrive.
- Total Project Amount: $1,879,900

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 2023 National Coastal Resilience Fund:

Advancing Community-Led Resilience Initiatives in a Sentinel Landscape. Project team: NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation (lead), Working Lands Trust, Environmental Defense Fund.

- Implement a collaborative and inclusive project with ecological, community, and military resilience benefits in key geographies across the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape. Project will 1) build critically needed capacity to support underserved and Tribal landowner enrollment in conservation practices; 2) facilitate robust, climate resilience planning; and 3) coordinate dialogues to reduce barriers to implementation for emerging, nature-based flood mitigation practices.
- Total Project Amount: $1,497,200

Ecological, Community, and Military Resilience Through Spoil Island Restoration in Bogue Sound. Project Lead: North Carolina Coastal Federation.

- Design multiple nature-based solutions, including oyster reef breakwaters, shoreline revegetation, wave attenuation units and seagrass restoration to restore dredge spoil island habitat mosaics in Bogue Sound, North Carolina. Project will finalize designs and secure permits for 2,200 linear feet of high-stability oyster substrate sills, salt marsh plantings and restoration of 2.5 acres of seagrass beds.
- Total Project Amount: $447,000

Building Capacity to Conserve Salt Marsh Habitat within Coastal Communities Project Team: LegacyWorks Group (lead) in coordination with SASMI implementation teams in four Southeast states.

- Build capacity within vulnerable coastal communities of the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative to identify, prioritize and advance projects to enhance and conserve salt marsh habitat. Project will develop a suite of 20-25 nature-based solutions that are site assessment and preliminary design ready in order to buffer storm surge, mitigate sea level rise impacts while also protecting local food production, historic sites, bird habitat and cultural traditions.
- Total Project Amount: $1,748,100

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 2024 Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund:

North Carolina Sandhills Longleaf Restoration and Management. Grantee: The Nature Conservancy.

- Restore longleaf pine on private lands by engaging landowners in cost share programs and implementing climate-smart agricultural practices. Project will restore 1,083 acres of longleaf, burn 60,623 acres, enhance 2,870 acres of habitat through groundcover planting and mechanical and chemical treatments, and protect 2,000 acres.
- Total Project Amount: $1,444,600

Restoring and Enhancing Longleaf Pine Habitat in Eastern North Carolina. Grantee: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

- Restore and enhance 29,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat in eastern North Carolina, improving habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers, Bachman's sparrows and northern bobwhites. Project will support longleaf plantings, removal of competing pine and hardwood trees, and prescribed burning, including prescribed burn specialists to write burn plans, assist landowners with controlled burns and with applying for financial assistance, and train landowners to become certified prescribed burners.
- Total Project Amount: $1,555,800

USDA Forest Service's Forest Landowner Support Program

Grantee: U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. Key Partners: Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Network, Black Family Land Trust, Limited Resource

Landowner Education and Assistance Network, McIntosh SEED, Prairie View A&M University, Roanoke Cooperative, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, Winston County Self-Help Cooperative, University of Georgia, Help for Landowners, Khuba International, mano-Y-ola.

- The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities will build the capacity of trusted community organizations that engage underserved landowners and facilitate equitable access to emerging markets for climate mitigation and forest resilience.
- Total Project Amount: $20,000,000

Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant:

The Atlantic Conservation Coalition. Lead applicant: North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Coalition Members: South Carolina Office of Resilience, Maryland Department of the Environment, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

- The selected application will support Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia in their initiative to protect and restore high-carbon polluted coastal habitats and peatlands and manage the protection, use, and restoration of forested land. The Atlantic Conservation Coalition will promote coastal resilience and sustainable forestry management practices. The grant will fund 21 implementation-ready projects focused on restoring coastal habitats and forests through reforestation, land revitalization, and the planting of native species and trees, thereby enhancing natural carbon sinks. Collectively, these projects will benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities across a range of coastal areas, Tribal communities, and rural communities.
- In North Carolina, over five years this funding will: 1) Support full-time EO 305 Coordinator at DNCR (DNCR); 2) Restore significant acres of peatland and pocosins on public and private land (33,000 acres across NC by TNC, 370 acres by Coastal Federation); 3) Install nearly 600 acres of living shorelines (Coastal Federation) Reforest 49,000 acres through a high-carbon forestry cost-share program (NC Forest Service); 4) Fund climate smart forestry management and conservation easements for Black and low-income forest landowners in Eastern NC (6,000 acres, Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Project and Black Family Land Trust); 5) Develop a program to fund the planting of 1,200 urban trees in small municipalities that lack capacity to do so themselves (NC Forest Service); and 6) Acquire of 3,300 acres of high-carbon and high conversion risk coastal plain and wetlands to add to the State Park System (DNCR).
- Total Project Amount: $421,238,074

Meeting Summaries

September 12, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 1:28 p.m.
Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Rick Long, Assistant Secretary, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Cameron Ingram, Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources, NCSU
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

Other Attendees: David Smith, Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Dr. Robert Bardon, Will Best, Jonathan Lanier, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Evan Davis, Allison Rodriguez, Sarah Weavil, Phil Wallace, Joe Beckman, Bill Edwards, Steve Woodson, Rodney Woolard, Scott Shoulars, Anita Kennedy, Nancy Richardson, John Shaw, Dr. Richard Reich and Veronica Jamison.

Reading of Ethics Reminder ETHICS REMINDER: Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

Minutes from the June 20, 2023, meeting were approved. Rick Long made the motion, and Chester Lowder seconded. It passed unanimously.

Evan Davis reported on current military contracts, with 1,146.63 total easement acres under contract with Working Land Trust. He reviewed the Military Partnership Agricultural Conservation Easements since July 2016 with all military partners. The number of acres conserved total 13,393.735 acres in six counties – Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington, Jones, and Pamlico counties. He reviewed the MOU with NC MAC. Out of a total award of $750,000 to date, expenses through August 2023 equal over $419,141, leaving a balance of $330,859.

Rick Long gave his report for the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He informed the committee that Kelly Jackson is going to retire, and now there are three permanent positions available. He spoke about upcoming registrations for meetings at the end of September, and said there was nothing new to report on Camp Butner at this time.

Assistant Secretary Jeff Michael presented for the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He announced that Brian Strong is the new Deputy Director for Natural Resources. He said he will know more about upcoming grant projects next Wednesday when hopefully the

state budget is approved. He talked about a flood risk reduction grant that has the stated goal of reducing flood risks through the design, implementation, and preservation of nature-based infrastructure, and $15 million is available. Letter of interest forms are available on their website (nclwf.nc.gov) and the deadline is August 31st. He also gave an update on the NC Land and Water Fund. Approximately $80 million is anticipated to be available.

Cameron Ingram gave an update from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. From June through August 2023, staff reported meeting with 17 private landowners within the NCSL focal area. These site visits resulted in management guidance being provided for 3,318 acres. This guidance targets the enhancement of habitat for various Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).

The Commission has continued to partner with The Nature Conservancy on an Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to complete 7,500 acres of hydrologic restoration on Angola Bay Game Land in Pender County. This project will enhance pocosin wetland habitat and provide community flood resilience benefits to downstream communities (Burgaw, Castle Hayne, and Wilmington).

Through a multi-year Competitive State and Tribal Wildlife Grant received in 2022, NCWRC and SCDNR are continuing efforts on Fort Liberty/Camp Mackall targeted at Sandhills Chub in collaboration with the Department of Defense and Coastal Carolina University (CCU). The Sandhills chub (Semotilus lumbee) is an imperiled headwater fish that is geographically restricted in the Sandhills ecoregion in North and South Carolina and a SGCN in both states. This project is focused on filling knowledge gaps to support future conservation efforts.

Bob Bardon with the College of Natural Resources at NC State said that a new extension specialist would be coming aboard the middle of July. He presented research of interest pertaining to climate change and wildfire risks, the effects of light pollution on bird populations, the release of the college's new guidebook to prescribed burning, and that the upcoming sustainable forestry conference would be upcoming on October 25th and 26th.

Chester Lowder presented the Sentinel Landscape Partnership report. He discussed partnership attendance at the climate resilience workshop in St. Louis, the land trust rally in Portland, OR, and an all-day REPI workshop.

Corey Hoilman spoke on the NC Sentinel Landscape Committee Annual Report for 2023. The report summarizes the activities conducted by the committee during its quarterly meetings as well as the contributions made during the prior year by each partner. It had been submitted to the General Assembly, and a handout was given to each committee member.

Steve Troxler asked if anyone had any other business items to discuss. He spoke on the North Carolina State Fair and how the department was working hard to get his office moved out there.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:28 pm. Jeff Michael made the motion, and Rick Long seconded.

December 11, 2023, 1:30 PM – 2:55 PM
Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Rick Long, Assistant Secretary, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Brian McRae, Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources, NCSU
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

Other Attendees: David Smith, Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Robert Bardon, Will Best, Jonathan Lanier, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Evan Davis, Allison Rodriguez, Phil Wallace, Joe Beckman, Bill Edwards, Steve Woodson, Rodney Woolard, Scott Shoulars, Anita Kenndy, Nancy Richardson, John Shaw, Chris Baillie, Jaime Simon, Richard Reich, and Veronica Jamison.

Reading of Ethics Reminder: ETHICS REMINDER Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

Approval of Previous Minutes: The minutes from September 12, 2023, were presented for approval. Rick Long made the motion, and Brian McRae seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Addition to the Committee: David Smith asked the committee to approve a new member to the Sentinel Landscape Committee team, David Harris from the NC Department of Transportation. Harris gave a brief background about his knowledge and experience with the Department of Transportation, currently serving as a state engineer, and how he works together with all state agencies.

David Smith asked for a motion to add him to the committee. Chester Lowder made the motion, Dr. Myron Floyd seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. David Harris is now a member of the Sentinel Landscape Committee.

Evan Davis gave his program update for Farmland Preservation. He reviewed all current open contracts with military partners – G&H Properties in Hyde County, Futral Farm in Onslow County, Jenkins Farm in Jones County, and Small Farm I and Small Farm II in Jones County. All of these open contracts are with Working Lands Trust as the grantee. Altogether, these easement projects cover 1,146.63 acres. Evan reviewed all military partnership projects since 2016 – 22

easements have been recorded with 13,393.735 acres preserved. Evan Davis also reviewed the MOU with NCMAC, stating over $750,000 has been awarded since October 2023, $423,453.70 has been spent, leaving a balance of $336,546.30.

Rick Long gave a brief update for Military and Veterans Affairs. He said that there wasn't very much in the way of new activity to bring to the committee's attention.

Jeff Michael gave his update for the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Jeff stated since the last update the NCLWF Board had awarded $48.9 million in 2023 grants, protecting over 17,656 acres. He said 2,100 acres will be added to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission game lands, 4,300 new acres to NC State Parks, and 6,000 acres for local parks and preserves. He stated that $10.1 million is going to protect 5,000 acres and military mission readiness near MCAS New River Air Station, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, MCAS Cherry Point, US Army Fort Liberty, USAF Seymour Johnson, and USMC Camp Lejeune. He reviewed the new upcoming projects of 2023, with funding of $7,793,616 that will preserve 4,493 acres in ENCSL counties.

Bryan McRae gave his update for NC Wildlife Resources. He spoke about the Bear Creek Tracks and the planning that has been put into the project to this point. Over $7.8 million will go toward preserving over 45,000 acres. He spoke about the agency's Green Growth Toolbox and using it for preservation efforts around the Fort Liberty area.

Dr. Myron Floyd gave his update on the NC College of Natural Resources. He discussed an article on an AI-powered waste management system which could revolutionize recycling. Dr. Lokendra Pal with the College of Natural Resources is partnering with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, IBM and the Town of Cary – with support from the US Department of Energy – to generate a process that reduces the 290 million tons of municipal solid waste generated each year. He mentioned research conducted by the college's Center for Geospatial Analytics that has created a land change model that simulates interactions between urban growth, increased flooding and how humans adapt in response. The new model is designed to offer a more realistic assessment of risk for urban planners, natural resource managers and other local government stakeholders. He said that the state experiences some of the greatest number of wildfires in the country due to the amount of wildlife urban interface areas, and discussed resources available through the NC Forest Service, including an interactive map to monitor the current wildfire danger rating in the area. The link to these resources is http://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/2023/11/wildfire-resources-in-north-carolina. He highlighted a series of workshops hosted by NC A&T about heir's property and the issues surrounding this topic. Heir's property is land that is jointly owned by descendants of a deceased person whose estate was never handled in probate court and passed down from generation to generation. The training sessions will provide valuable materials and guidance to avoid involuntary property loss and protect and preserve family land for generations to come.

Chester Lowder gave his update of the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He spoke on the Association for Defense Communities (ADC) conference that was held on November 6-8 that was focused on building resilient communities that support America's military. The forum

was a 3-day event designed to help bring together the installations and their surrounding communities to discuss innovation and enhancing infrastructure. He also spoke on the Conservation Finance Opportunities in Sentinel Landscapes webinar that was presented on December 6. The webinar featured case studies of Sentinel Landscapes tapping into new partnerships and sources of financing to conserve natural resources, promote economic sustainability, and enhance military missions. He spoke on the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership. This quarter saw the development of a drafted strategic plan, now with one framework to guide the planning work versus two different frameworks previously. A small committee of the principals is tasked with development of a proposed vision statement such that each subsequent 5-year plan contributes strategically to the overall long-term vision based on measurable goals of the ENCSL. That committee will work with the principals and interested Partnership members to develop and refine the proposed vision statement (members of that committee include Pete Benjamin, Dewitt Hardee, Will Summer, Bill Holman and Carmen Lombardo).

Mary Lou Addor spoke about the progress summary for the last quarter, which was focused on the development or completion of new projects while enhancing current efforts and deliverables to produce organizational or cross-sector results and outcomes.

David Harris gave a brief update regarding his background with the NC Department of Transportation. He said he was excited about given the opportunity to be a part of the committee.

Chris Baille asked about the possibility of putting together a planning committee to work closer with the Federal Coordinating Committee. He wants to offer the resources needed to make sure the partnership structure's calibration and focus aligns with the FCC's. He suggested having virtual or in-person meetings with the FCC. He is willing to meet in person or virtual this quarter to see if something can be put together, and suggested meeting in January – the sooner the better, he said.

Jeff Michaels and Dewitt Hardee suggested that the Partnership keep the same players involved who were around since the start of the program.

Commissioner Troxler asked what was missing and encouraged the committee to get together and get the structure in place to get things back on track.

Dewitt Hardee said when this was originally put together in 2016, the target was to combine federal and state funds with some private partnership to serve the needs of the military, and said this should remain the committee's focus.

Corey Hoilman spoke on the new mapping tools and the new website. He thanked Christian Vose for working to get the new symbology included, and asked if the scope could be broadened to include Camp Butner and MOTSU.

David Smith asked if there was further additional business, and hearing none he asked for a motion to adjourn. Jeff Michael made the motion, Brian McRae seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.

March 18, 2024, 1:00 PM – 1:53 PM
Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Rick Long, Assistant Secretary, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Brian McRae, Deputy Director of Operations, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Bob Bardon for College of Natural Resources, NCSU
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- David Harris, State Roadside Environmental Engineer, NC Department of Transportation

Other Attendees: Joe Austin, Mitch Peele, Chris Baillie, Justin Boner, Mark Pfanstiehl, Mikey Fulk, Bill Edwards, Dewitt Hardee, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, David Smith, Commissioner Steve Troxler, Allison Rodriguez, Evan Davis
Online: David Myers, Janine McLawhorn, Denise Evans, Jamie Simon, Jason Rose, Lisa Shealy, Julius George, Bill Ross, Rodney Woolard, Jimmy Johnson, Michelle Lovejoy, Douglas Taggart, Tom Potter, Will Allen, Addie Thornton, Cheryl Tapanes, Anita Kennedy

Reading of Ethics Reminder: ETHICS REMINDER – Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

Approval of Previous Minutes: The minutes from December 11, 2023, were presented for approval. Dr. Bardon made the motion, and Jeff Michael seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Evan Davis gave his program update for Farmland Preservation. He reviewed all current open contracts with military partners – Futral Farm in Onslow County, Boyd Farm in Washington County, and Jenkins Farm, Small Farm I and Small Farm II in Jones County. All of these open contracts are with Working Lands Trust as the grantee. Altogether, these easement projects cover 2,800 acres. Evan reviewed all military partnership projects since 2016 – 22 easements have been recorded with 13,119.715 acres preserved. Evan Davis shared a table showing the easement purchase funding summary that encompassed each project to date. The chart detailed NCDA&CS funding, partner funding from REPI and USDA, as well as landowner funding. Dollars were utilized at a 3-to-1 rate.

Rick Long gave a brief update for Military and Veterans Affairs. The agency is working to set up an information session for local communities around the military installation. North Carolina did not receive any grants last year, so they are meeting with funded groups to gain feedback on the process and a better understanding of the application. Regarding Operation Homefront, Long said there are 105 semifinalists and eight of those are from North Carolina. They will be holding a semifinalist event on April 19th to celebrate those semifinalists.

Jeff Michael gave his update for the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. NC Land and Water Fund received 113 applications with $103.6 million in requests for their 2024 grants. Will Summer gave an update for the group. The applications break down into 68 land acquisitions, 29 restorations, seven innovative stormwater and nine planning applications. Twenty-three of those applications are in the ENCSL counties with $3.6 million in requests for 5,188 acres. Funding decisions will be made in October. Governor Cooper issued an executive order setting forth goals for preservation and conservation of an additional 1 million acres by 2040 and the restoration of 1 million acres by 2040. Summer said this is encouraging to hear coming from Raleigh and should mobilize partnerships between state, federal and private entities in NC.

Brian McRae gave his update for NC Wildlife Resources.

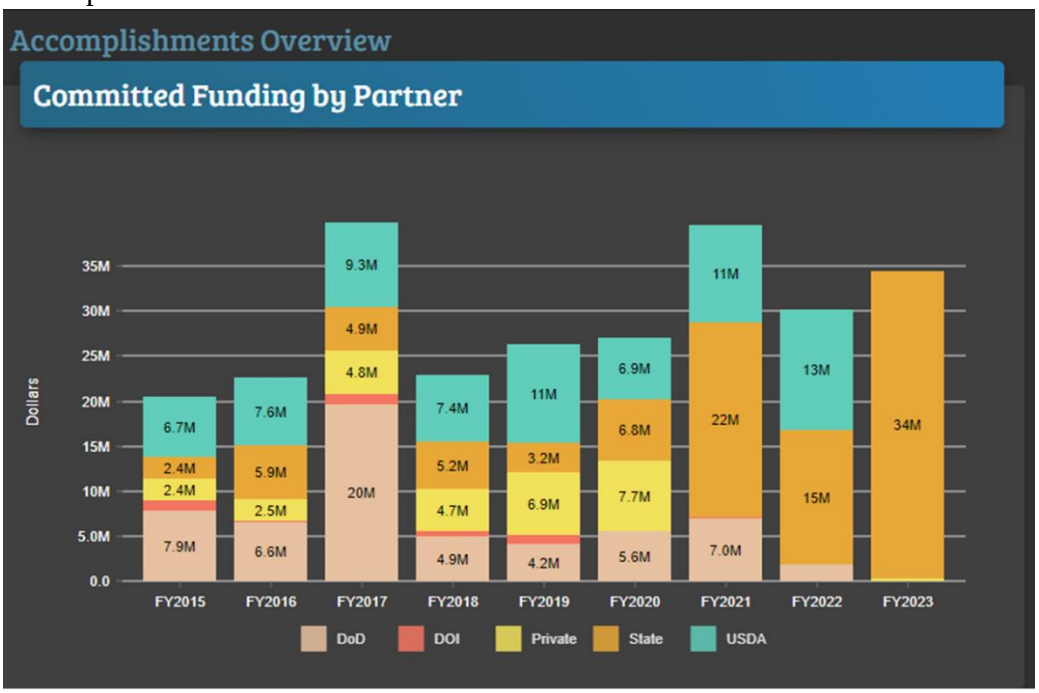
- RASP update – prescribed burning on 900 acres, reached out to 20+ private landowners, and provided technical guidance resulting in conservation of over 2,000 acres.
- There are eight agreements and 491 acres enrolled in the Tax Deferment Program for this tax year.
- There were 2,500 acres of prescribed burns, and $5 million in IRA funds will be used to combat sea level rise as well as other climate threats.
- Evan Davis asked if the deferment in their program shows up the same way as PUV does on a tax card.

Dr. Myron Floyd gave an update for the NC State College of Natural Resources. Some new publications that may be of interest included Developing Successful Tree Ordinances and Landowner Assistance for NC PUV and VAD. There are three more heirs property workshops scheduled through July. The workshop on May 8 will be in Robeson County, which is in the landscape area. Other workshops include those around the Prescribed Fire Associations and Present Use Valuation for forestry. There is a lot of effort around increasing prescribed fire on the ground, and a lot of work being done with associations across the state and some tribes to educate about those options.

Chester Lowder gave his update of the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership.

- He said they are nearing completion of the Sentinel Landscapes data call, in which they collect information on dollars committed, acres protected through acquisition or easement, and acres of working lands enrolled in some form of cost-share programming. They had a banner year for state funding, with more than $34 million dollars committed, 10,824 acres protected through acquisition or easement, and 130,142 acres enrolled by our state partners or by NGO partners using funding awarded by a state program. The

Department of Defense, Department of Interior, and USDA funding and acreage will be added by those departments shortly, which will provide a full picture of the amazing accomplishments of the ENCSL in 2023.



DoD, DOI, USDA to be added to 2023

- Importantly, Lowder said they are aware that rolling up accomplishments into dollars and acres only captures a portion of the transformative work of ENCSL partners. They will be establishing an ENCSL External Stakeholder Communications Workgroup in the very near term. One of its functions will be to even more effectively highlight the diversity work that partners are pursuing across the landscape via multiple modes of communications, such as newsletters and GIS story maps.
- Since the last NC Sentinel Landscape Committee meeting, partners have submitted proposals under numerous different funding opportunities to support projects that advance ENCSL priorities. These funding opportunities include NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund, NOAA's Climate Ready Workforce, NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, NC Land and Water Fund, and OSD's Office of Local Defense and Community Cooperation's Installation Resilience Program.
- Partners are currently working to develop proposals to numerous open funding calls, including NFWF's America the Beautiful Challenge and National Coastal Resilience Fund, EPA's Carbon Pollution Reduction Program, USDA USFS's Forest Legacy Program, and a REPI-Land and Water Conservation Fund Partnership program: The Readiness and Recreation Initiative. They are also awaiting the release of USDA NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Numerous partners have represented their organizations and the ENCSL at recent convenings of the regional partnerships with which they collaborate, including the

SERPPAS Principals Meeting and the Defense Community Workshop hosted by University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

- The ENCSL Program Review kicked off in earnest in January and has made demonstrable progress towards decision-making on key focus areas. Chris Baillie will be giving an update on that process as the next agenda item.

David Harris gave a brief update from the NC Department of Transportation. He said they are continuing to look at project lists and how they could be of benefit to this committee, and they hope to provide GIS information that could be helpful.

Chris Baille (ENCSL Coordinator) providing an update on the program review. Baille presented the timeline of the ENCSL Program Review process today, starting with the Dec. 2023 presentation to the NC Sentinel Landscape Committee.

- Baille detailed ENCSL Program Review Q&A and open discussion sessions held in early January, in which partners were able to ask questions and provide recommendations for the ENCSL Program Review. One recommendation from these meetings was to make governance structure and strategic planning the initial focus of the Program Review.
- Two workgroups, an ENCSL Governance Structure workgroup and an ENCSL Strategic Planning workgroup, were established to develop recommendations for the full partnership to react to during the Kickoff ENCSL Program Review convening.
- Baille discussed the recommendations proposed by each workgroup to the full ENCSL Partnership in the Program Review Kickoff convening (1/31).
    - The Strategic Planning workgroup proposed a bifurcated approach to completing the strategic plan. To complete the high-level components of the Plan, the governance body that is established will work with the ENCSL coordinator and Will Allen (LegacyWorks Group) to vet, refine, and, where necessary, develop these components into a full draft of Sections 1-3. The full partnership will then be solicited for their comments and vetting via a full draft shared on Basecamp. After a set comment period allowing time for partners to contribute their feedback, the ENCSL governance body will be convened to address and reconcile any suggestions and finalize Sections 1-3 of the plan. To develop Sections 5 and 6, three regional planning processes, with geographies aligning with the three represented military branches in the ENCSL: US Marine Corps, US Air Force, and US Army, will be conducted. The goals for each region will largely be driven by the outside-the-fence-line needs of the branch-specific installation or installations (i.e., MCIEAST, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Fort Liberty). In the regional convenings, the installations and their regional partners will work to identify strategies and actions that advance the outlined goals through efforts that align with and advance partners' respective organizational missions.
    - The Governance Structure workgroup proposed the creation of an ENCSL Advisory Committee. This body would have seats for the ENCSL Committee,

Anchor Installation POCs, the SLP-FCC, the NC County Commissioners Association, and the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

- Baille noted that while the strategic planning process recommended by the workgroup was widely accepted and required only a few additional clarifications by the ENCSL Strategic Planning workgroup, there were a number of concerns about the ENCSL Governance Structure workgroup's initial recommendation. Namely, partners felt that this approach did little to simplify the organizational structure of the ENCSL and that having a single seat for the ENCSL Committee was insufficient to ensure adequate representation of agricultural, wildlife, and natural resource interests. As such, the Governance Structure workgroup developed a new proposed solution to present to the Partnership during the 2/28 ENCSL Program Review convening.
- The approach proposed by the Governance Structure workgroup that was presented to the workgroup on 2/28 was to pursue the expansion of the ENCSL Committee to include ex-officio membership that would broaden the representation of interests and have that expanded ENCSL Committee serve as the governing body of the ENCSL. Proposed ex-officio members included anchor installation POCs, a SLP-FCC representative, and a number of additional proposed seats. The additional proposed seats included NCDEQ, NC A&T, Association of County Commissioners, and an NGO representing working land owners.
- Chris said that this proposed alternative governance structure was widely embraced by the Partnership and that formally presenting the proposed approach to the ENCSL Committee was the Partnership-endorsed next step.
- Chris then asked if the Committee would be willing to consider the proposal to expand the ENCSL Committee to serve as the ENCSL governance body, which would require amending the statutory language that established the ENCSL Committee to allow the inclusion of federal agency representatives.
- Discussion:
    - Commissioner Troxler said the he and Evan have had a lot of conversations about this, and that they like this alternative structure as we are a large part of this.
    - To add federal members it may take some legislative work, additional members that are within the state would be able to be added to the committee with little issue.
- Commissioner Troxler requested a vote on the issue. Chester Lowder made a motion to move forward, and Rick Long seconded the motion.
- Chester Lowder asked how to include private landowners in this. One addition he had considered was the NC Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- The motion was amended to include a representative from the NC Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to the ex-officio seats. It was seconded by Rick Long, and the motion passed unanimously.

- Commissioner Troxler entertained a motion to approved the alternative recommendation for the Governance Body. The motion was made by Chester Lowder, and seconded by Rick Long. It passed unanimously.

Additional Business – None.

Any Public Comments – None.

Commissioner Troxler asked if there was further additional business, and hearing none he asked for a motion to adjourn. Jeff Michael made the motion, Dr. Bardon seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:53 PM.

June 11, 2024, 1:00 PM – 1:42 PM

Attendees:

Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Secretary Grier Martin, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources, NCSU
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- David Harris. State Roadside Environmental Engineer, NCDOT

Other Attendees: David Smith, Doug Taggart, Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Robert Bardon, Jonathan Lanier, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Evan Davis, Allison Rodriguez, Mark Pfanstiehl, Steve Woodson, Scott Shoulars, Anita Kenndy, Nancy Richardson, Mikey Fulk, Hannah Bodenhamer, Richard Reich, Cameron Dawson, and Veronica Jamison.

Reading of Ethics Reminder: Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

The minutes for the March 18, 2024, meeting were presented for approval. Bob Bardon made the motion, and Jeff Michaels seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He said that the six current open military contracts with Working Lands Trust total nearly 3,000 acres, five of which are MCIEAST projects and the other project is an Air Force-partnered easement.

He reviewed the 23 recorded military partnership agricultural conservation easements since July 2016. Twenty Air Force easements and three MCIEAST easements have been recorded in six ENCSL counties, preserving over 13,000 acres. Davis reviewed the easement purchase funding summary for completed military partnership agricultural conservation easements. The total to date of state, REPI and USDA funds plus the amount of landowner donation toward easement purchase value is $28,309,105.57. He reviewed the pre-proposal submitted on April 4 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge 2024 requesting $2 million in grant funding, and the upcoming Johnston County submission to the Natural Resource Conservation Service for an Air Force-focused RCPP proposal that will ask for $12 million.

Secretary Grier Martin reported on the ongoing efforts to avoid losing over 100 jobs in Wayne County connected to a potential F-15 training area closing with the Air Force. He said he is working with senators and congressmen to help prevent the closure of this training area.

Jeff Michael stated he is between cycles at this time. In September he said he will definitely have more to report on. He said work continues to preserve natural land through the Land and Water Fund. He said over half a million acres have been preserved by the program to date.

Commissioner Steve Troxler stated it will be a new day for conservation, working landscapes, and farmland preservation once the new state conservation tax credit passes. He stated the bill would likely pass the following day with the potential 9:30 House vote.

Dr. Bob Bardon said he had nothing to report.

Chester Lowder reported there is the possibility of some new developments in upcoming events and plans that he said Chris Baillie may be able to speak on.

David Harris said he had nothing to report on, but also said there are several ongoing projects that would be discussed at a later date.

Chris Baillie reported on the ENCSL program review and gave an update on the governance structure, strategic planning, and the coordination capacity and resourcing. He showed the current partnership committee seats, and presented what it would look like to add additional ex-officio seats for installation points of contact and representatives from the NC Department of Environmental Quality, NC A&T University, the Association of County Commissioners, and NGOs that represent owners of working lands. He reviewed the status of the ENCSL Strategic Plan review by individual section. He stated the first three sections need only some vetting and refinements, but a full buildout is needed for the final two sections – Goals, Strategies, and Actions, and Metrics, Communications, and Funding – both of which had been the product of the three regional planning processes.

Baillie spoke on the last planning meeting he had at Fort Liberty on May 29. He stated the next meeting on June 21 in Newport would be focused on MCIEAST. He also gave a program review and timeline for the upcoming year with potential target dates to strategic plan of completion.

Cameron Dawson provided a brief legislative update. Senate Bill 355, the 2024 Farm Act, has language that would reenact the conservation tax credit that was repealed in 2013. Section 15

would reenact the tax credit for certain real property donations and modify the purposes for which donated land will qualify for the credit. The credit would be available to both individuals and corporations, and the amount of the credit and the caps are the same – 25% of the fair market value of the property, capped at $250,000 for individuals and $500,000 for corporations. Under the credit as reenacted and modified by this section, the credit would be allowed only for land donated for the following six purposes: (i) Farmland preservation; (ii) Fish and wildlife conservation; (iii) As a buffer to limit land use activities that would restrict or interfere with military training, testing, or operation on a military installation or training area; (iv) Floodplain protection; (v) Historic landscape conservation; and (vi) Public trails or access to public trails This section would be effective for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2024.

Dawson said that Section 17 would add two voting members to the Sentinel Landscapes Committee, namely the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary's designee and a representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Partnership. This section would also add two nonvoting ex officio members, namely the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Coordinator and a representative from the United States Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program. This section would also make the Commissioner of Agriculture or the Commissioner's designee the permanent chair of the Sentinel Landscapes Committee.

David Smith spoke on the Farm Act, saying if it passes it is going to have a definite impact on state conservation programs. He asked if there was anything else to report, and hearing nothing from the group entertained a motion to dismiss. Grier Martin made the motion and was seconded by Bob Bardon. The meeting adjourned at 1:42 PM.

This report was prepared by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on behalf of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee.